PASTORAL PRAYER

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April 26, 1987, 11:00 a.m. Worship Service

Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago

Almighty and Eternal God, it is difficult not to believe in your sovereignty and love and amazing creativity on a beautiful morning such as this. And so, as we come to you in prayer, we lift our hearts in joyful praise...

Praise to you, great God, for the glory of your creation.

Praise to you for the beauty of the world, for the bright blue sky, and clean air, and sparkling lake.

Praise to you for your image in us, for the mystery and majesty of our own humanity.

Praise to you for your love for the creation and for us.

Praise and honor and adoration to your great and eternal God.

And praise to you, Lord God, for that amazing word which we crowded into this place to hear and sing and celebrate last Sunday. We heard it before, but we were astonished again - at its simplicity and its power and its goodness. We praise you that your dear son rose from his grave and that death has no power over us. We praise you for the freedom in which we are privileged to live, and the unbounded and undying hope with which we may live into the future. We praise you for the astonishing news of the Resurrection... yet - we do confess that even though we are here again, on another resurrection day, the astonishment is diminished and the joy more restrained... and the hope tempered by the reality which is not always hopeful.

Help us to remember, Lord God,... that we live in a world in which a resurrection has happened... that the battle has been won, that our Lord Christ lives and calls us into a future that is his.

We lift up before you joyful hearts - and we lift up our concerns for a world that needs hope this morning...

We hold up before our concern for the world's future... we pray, earnestly, for people in Sri Lanka, and Northern Ireland, and India - and South Africa, and Lebanon... divided by race and religion and ancient prejudice... We pray for the individuals victimized by violence and we ask you to remind us, painful as it is, that each death is an individual, loved by you, made in your image.

We earnestly pray for the success of the Arms Negotiations, for a spirit of realism and trust... We pray for the negotiations - give them

strength and wisdom equal to their task. We pray for President Reagan and Chairman Gorbachev for their health and strength.

And, Lord God, we pray - for those whose commitment to a future of peace and justice is impatient and strong: and who make us uncomfortable with their singularity of purpose. We sense that they express your word - even when they do not recognize it... They are in Washington today as your prophets always showed up in the capital... and so, in spite of our discomfort we ask you to bless them and protect them and preserve their idealism and their zealotry for the things that make for peace... And we pray for those whose responsibilities include dealing with them - with the police and employees of the Government and the Congress... And help us to remember, O God, that two weeks ago we celebrated your Son's noisy demonstration in the capital and that what he did there was disruptive and offensive to politicians and priests.

We pray, O God, for our city - for a mayor newly elected and newly empowered... Bless him - bless those who contend for him and with him - that in that process - something of your will may be done. Because we trust in the hope of the resurrection - we pray for the coming of your Kingdom here - in our city. O God of justice - judge us when we plan a stadium for our gladiators and can't fix the elevators in the homes of our poor - O God of love - bless those who take care of others in our city smile on those whose labors enhance the humanity of our common life - musicians and artists - be present in our hospitals and concert halls and museums: be present in our courtrooms and classrooms and churches...

We pray for those whose needs are urgent this day - for those of our number who are ill...

And we pray for our selves, confessing our own needs...

You are father and mother to us... You love us without condition. You are behind us and ahead of us and beside us everyday. And you have shown us that nothing in life, not even our death, will separate us from your love. So we open ourselves to you, O God... be with us... give us gifts we need to be whole people - to live honestly and compassionately with brothers and sisters and to be faithful to you as long as we live.

Hear us now - as we join our voices with your people all over the world and your people in the past - praying words you taught your disciples, saying -